# EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC ENGLISH PRONOUNCING DICTIONARY

# INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE ON SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

# STUDENTS INTEREST IN ORAL ENGLISH

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of English pronouncing Dictionary (e-EPD) instructional resource on senior secondary school students' interest in oral English. The study employed the non-randomized pre-test, post-test control group quasi experimental design. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The area of the population of the study was Enugu East Local government area of Enugu state consisted of 130 senior secondary class two (SS2) students of all the four co-educational schools in Enugu East Local Government Area. One intact class was randomly sampled. From each of the schools and assigned to either the experimental or control group. Oral English interest inventory (OEII) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by five experts from the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). The OEII was trial tested using twenty (20) SS2 students before administering them on the sample for the study. The coefficient obtained was 0.18 showing that the instrument was reliable. Using the instrument a pre-test was administered to the groups before the experiment which lasted for four weeks. A post-test was administered after the experiment. The scores of the students from the test was used as the data for the study. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA was used to test the null hypothesis at P< 0.05, the result from the data analysis showed that students taught Oral English using e-EPD instructional resource showed higher interest than those taught using the conventional resource. The findings present crucial implications for teachers of English language, students and other stakeholders in English pedagogy. Based on the findings recommendations were made amongst which is that teachers and learners should be exposed to the electronic English pronouncing dictionary to enhance the academic achievement and interest of senior secondary school students in oral English.

**KEYWORDS**: Oral English, Dictionary, Resource, Interest, Test

## INTRODUCTION

In the normal Nigeria senior secondary school Oral English class today, English language teachers, most of whom Banjo (2012) and Anokwulu (2010) describe as poor pronunciation models, decided the fate of the learners. Conventional materials which include paper dictionaries, textbooks, posters, write-ups, charts and the order of the day Taped materials are sparingly used. Words to be learnt and their corresponding transcriptions, are identified from these materials. The teacher grapples with working out the right pronunciation of these words by first decoding the individual sound symbols, the number of syllables and the right place for the primary stress. He writes down sounds and transcriptions of words by first decoding the individual sounds-symbols, the number of syllables and the right place for the primary stress.

He writes down sounds and transcriptions of words on the chalk board and pronounces them, correctly or incorrectly and invites the students to repeat after him. The word 'climate' for instance, is transcribed klar.met/or'klar.mit/, and 'climatic' is transcribed /klar'mae.trk/. Because of the bound morpheme {-ic} suffixed to 'climate' realize {climate+ic}, the stress moves from the first syllable to the penultimate syllable and the // or/I/ in the last syllable of 'climate' changes to /ae/. The teacher has to work all this out before pronouncing. This is surely an uphill task for this teacher. In some cases, there are variations in the teacher's pronunciations of a word that has just one pronunciation form. On the part of students, they sit passively and listen to the teacher, imitating him only when he invites them to. They take down transcriptions of words from the teacher's on the chalkboard. Sometimes, some of these students correctly identify sounds in writing but never in pronunciation.

Considering the pronunciation inconsistencies triggered by the use of texts and other obsolete materials, Ado (2014), Sobkowiak (2007) and Landau (2001) persistently recommend the use of modern media in the teaching and learning of Oral English in Nigeria. Modern media are technology-based. In the 21$^{st}$ century, technology is at the doorsteps of the new generation. Some of the English language teachers employ the use of educational technology but sparingly. These media include vinyl tapes, reel-to-reel tapes, video tapes, language laboratories where available, and programmed texts.

An electronic dictionary is a dictionary whose data exists in digital form and can be accessed through different media. Electronic dictionaries come as dedicated handheld devices, as applications on smart-phones, table computers or computer software, as free or purchased online products, as a function built into an E-reader or as CD-ROMs and DVD- ROMs classically packaged with a printed dictionary for installation on computer. Most types of dictionaries are available in electronic form including general-purpose bilingual dictionaries, historical dictionaries, monolingual learner's dictionaries such as Oxford English Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English and the Macmillan English Dictionary, and specialized dictionaries (Nesi, 2009; De Schryver, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the electronic-English pronouncing Dictionary is explored.

*English Pronouncing Dictionary (*EPD*)* is a major pronouncing dictionary designed for foreign learners of English. It is an established classic work of reference which includes pronunciation information pertinent to the needs of current users, both native speakers of English seeking an authoritative guide, and EFL/ESL users the world over (Roach, Hartman &Setter, 2006). Szynalski (2012) and Sobkowiak (2005) assert that the EPD is the first English pronouncing dictionary to exist on CD-ROM. According to the lexicographers Roach, Hartman and Setter, the EPD was launched into the computer age with the publication of its 15$^{th}$ edition in 1997 when all its entries got converted into a computer database, and the creation of the CD-ROM version of the EPD became one of its major developments. The electronic *English Pronouncing Dictionary (*e-EPD) is therefore a compact disc version of the paperback EPD which displays all the data (sounds and words) of the paper version and more on the computer. It is an impressive audio-visual instructional material that readily offers the pronunciation of a sound/word with a click on that sound/word. It contains first-rate top-quality audio recording of all headwords, distinct and accurate display of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription for both British and American accents, and further functional electronic provisions of Voice Recording, Exercises, QUICK find and Sound Search. The e-EPD comprises phonetic transcriptions of English words that cover both British and American pronunciation, together with inflections and proper names. The CD-ROM offers additional features way beyond the book version. It is vastly available since it is sold with its paper version.

The application of the EPD CD-ROM evokes an active classroom where the learner is fully involved. The teacher is only a facilitator and guide. With the EPD CD-ROM installed in the computers and the objectives of the lesson set, the teacher introduces the lesson. With the class he arrives at an inventory of sounds/words whose pronunciation will be learnt. He guides students to type in each sound/word for the search either on the manual keyboard or the electronic one provided by the EPD CD-ROM. Initial alphabets evoke a display of a range of words with similar orthographic realizations. Using 'climate' as an example, when 'clim' is typed-in, 'climate' appears as one of the options. The student clicks on it. 'Climate' is displayed on the screen, with its various inflections and corresponding transcriptions. The search can as well be done typing in phonetic symbols instead. The teacher controls the class by stating when and the number of times each student or group should click on the microphone icon to hear either the British or American pronunciation of 'climate'. A word is pronounced for as many times as the command is given. These pronunciations are provided by the very authors of the EPD. The teacher involves students in the evaluation process through guiding them to record their own pronunciation, by clicking on the 'record' icon, in order to compare with the disc model. *The English Pronouncing Dictionary* CD-ROM is a significant accomplishment in electronic phono-lexicography. This CD-ROM version is becoming more advanced and more popular in its use owing to the fact that it is portable, affordable and very convenient to use. It saves time, pronounces words clearly and stores difficult words for special memorization, making learning more accessible and individualized, active and less stressful.

**Purpose of Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the effect of Electronic English pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource on students' achievement and interest in Oral English. Specifically the study sought to find out the effect of electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource on students' interest in Oral English.

**Research Question**

One research question was posed to guide t he study

1. What are the mean interest scores of students taught Oral English using electronic English instructional resource and those taught using the conventional resource?

**Ho$_1$:** There is no significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught Oral English using electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource and those taught using the conventional resource.

**METHODS**

The design of the study was quasi-experimental of pre-test post-test design. The design was considered appropriate for the study because intact classes were used. The area of the study was Enugu East Local government area of Enugu State Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all the 1916 (one thousand nine hundred and sixteen senior secondary two (SS2) students of the government owned secondary schools in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The sample for the study consisted of 130 (one hundred and thirty) SS2 students of all the four co-educational schools in Enugu East Local Government Area. One intact class was sampled from each of the schools. The students in their intact classes were assigned to either the experimental group ie (electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource group) or the control group) or the control group (conventional text resource group). The groups were taught separately in their schools by their regular English Language teachers. To ensure conformity to experimental

procedure, the researcher prepared the lesson plans used for the experimental and control groups. The regular English language teachers for the classes were trained to be familiar with the operational concept of the study. Identified extraneous variables were controlled thus their effect on the validity of the study checked. Oral English Achievement Test (OEAT) was used for data collection. The instrument was adapted by the researcher from past questions of the West African examination council and validated by five experts from the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN). The reliability of the instrument was tested before administering them on the sample for the study. The coefficient obtained from OEAT was 0.88 showing that the instrument was reliable. Using the instrument a pre-test was administered to the groups before the treatment. The experiment lasted for four weeks. A post-test was administered after the experiment and the scores the students obtained from the test were used as the data for the study. The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation while the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

The results of the study are presented according to the research question in table 1 and the hypothesis in table 2.

**Research Question 1**

What are the mean interest scores of students taught. Oral English using electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource and those taught using conventional resource?

**Table 1**

| Group N | Pre-Test | | | | Post-Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean Gain |
| Experimental 75 | 2.77 | .32 | 2.91 | .15 | .14 |
| Control 55 | 2.54 | .37 | 2.66 | .24 | .12 |

Table 1 shows the interest mean scores of students who were exposed to electronic English pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource and those not so exposed to it in Oral English. It shows that the students who were exposed to electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource had mean interest score of 2.91 with a standard deviation of 0.15 at the post-test while those who were not so exposed had post-test interest mean score of 2.66 with a standard deviation of 0.24 interest mean gain scores of 0.14 and 0.12 show that the experimental group had higher interest mean score than the control group.

**Hypothesis II**

There is no significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught Oral English using electronic *English Pronouncing Dictionary* instructional resource and those taught using conventional resource.

**Table 2: Analysis of Covariance of the effect of Electronic *English Pronouncing Dictionary* Instructional Resource on Students' Interest in Oral English**

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 4.882[a] | 7 | .697 | 19.461 | .000 |
| Intercept | 10.123 | 1 | 10.123 | 282.467 | .000 |
| Pre-interest | .228 | 1 | .228 | 6.367 | .013 |
| Group | 2.855 | 1 | 2.855 | 79.660 | .000 |

| Table 2: Contd., | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | .028 | 1 | .028 | .786 | .377 |
| Location | .052 | 1 | .052 | 1.458 | .230 |
| Group*Gender | .001 | 1 | .001 | .035 | .851 |
| Group*Location | .001 | 1. | .001 | .028 | .868 |
| Gender*Location | .071 | 1 | .071 | 1.973 | .163 |
| Error | 4.372 | 122 | .036 | | |
| Total | 996.922 | 130 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 9.254 | 129 | | | |
| a.R Squared =.528(Adjusted R Squared=.500) | | | | | |

Table 2 shows that the probability associated with the calculated value of F (79.600) for the effect of electronic *English Pronouncing Dictionary* instructional resource on students' interest in Oral English is 0.000. Since the probability value of 0.000 is less than the 0.5 level of significance (p<.05), the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the mean interest scores of students taught Oral English using electronic *English Pronouncing Dictionary* instructional resource and those taught using conventional resource in favour of the experimental group.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings presented in table one reveals that the students taught with the e-EPD instructional resource had a post-test mean interest score of 2.91 with a mean gain score of 12. The result show that electronic dictionary has a significant positive effect on students interest in Oral English the result of this study is in agreement with the behaviourist theory which promotes the use of standard audio models in the teaching and learning of language. The result also agrees with the cognitive-constructivist perspective which subscribes to the use of modern technology-resources in the teaching and learning of language. On the other hand the results from the study contradict the findings of Weschler and Pitts (2000) who posited that the electronic dictionary does not influence students attitude to the oral aspect of English. The significant higher interest of the experimental group in Oral English shows that English language learners can master Oral English better if well exposed to the use of the e-EPD. This better performance of the experimental group could be attributed to the electronic audio-visual advantage of the e-EPD which enabled students participate actively in the lesson, in the process of handling the computers, viewing the dictionary transcriptions and other functions directly on the native speaker model.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource had significant positive effect on senior secondary school students' interest in Oral English the students taught Oral English using the instructional resource performed significantly higher in the interest post-test than those taught using the conventional text resource. The results of this study have proved the effectiveness of the electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary instructional resource on students' interest in Oral English. English language teachers in Nigeria should be encouraged to adopt this modern resource as an alternative to the conventional text resource for smoother teaching and learning of the oral English.

- The students should be encouraged to make use of the electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary for Oral English lessons both within and beyond the classrooms.

- Teacher-training institutions like faculties and colleges of education should include the use of electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary in their scheme of work for students of English language.

- Parents should make budget for the provision of electronic English Pronouncing Dictionary and computers for

their children to enhance their pronunciation power.

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